was the fact that our food supplies were also in jeopardy. As I have already pointed out, our margin was a very narrow one. Harvests had failed, not merely in this country and on the Continent, but in the Argentine, and the nearest abundant supply was to be found in Australia. That meant long voyages for our dwindling Mercantile Marine. At home, in spite of the appeals made by both Lord Selborne and his successor, Lord Crawford, no steps had been taken by the late Government to increase production. The yield of our soil was steadily diminishing. During the last twelve months the wheat production of this country had fallen off by about one-sixth. Unless some steps were adopted without delay to bring more land into cultivation, and to increase the fertility of that which was capable of cultivation, then there would be a further grave diminution in the quantity of food raised in these islands. That meant either privation or a further inroad on our already overburdened shipping.

*The food problem*

As soon as the War Cabinet entered upon its functions, it caused a careful and searching survey to be made of the national position in respect of all these urgent problems. As to many of them, the report presented to us showed that the late Government had decided in principle that some measures should be taken immediately to cope with the difficulty, but in each case the report ended with the words "

*Government*

## No Action Taken.[35]

A Government that had surrendered to the Allied military strategy which had decreed a war of attrition had neglected to take the necessary steps to prevent the wearing down process going against us. If it was